DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 324 075 JC 900 527

AUTHOR Lanham, Marion; Cowan, Marlene C.
TITLE Learning Logic in the Global Arena through Telecommunication.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 36p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; *Course Evaluation; Cultural Awareness; Followup Studies; *Futures (of Society); Global Approach; *Humanities Instruction; Instructional Materials; Logic; News Media; *Newspapers; Online Systems; Social Cognition; Student Attitudes; *Teaching Methods; *Telecommunications; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Harford Community College MD

ABSTRACT

The Information Age is a new cultural era in which the dominant resource is information. For educators attempting to prepare the increasingly diverse student body for the 1990's and beyond, the scope, magnitude, and constantly changing nature of this Information Age renders the task monumental. In an effort to create a real-world context for a humanities survey elective, Harford Community College in Maryland utilized daily newspaper clippings, wire copy, and an on-line computer network service as the primary instructional resources in the college's Principles of Logic course. Students were taught within the perspective of the "human image system," defined as the cultural and social particulars through which each individual interprets his or her world. Awareness of one's own image system and the image systems of others is intended to broaden tolerance of cultural diversity. Following the course, a follow-up questionnaire was sent to 52 students to elicit reactions to the course content and to determine the value of the instructional materials used. Survey results, based on responses from 27 students, included the following: (1) over half of the respondents found newspapers to be a very valuable tool in increasing critical thinking skills; (2) only one-third felt that using newspapers in the class increased their reading of newspapers outside of class; (3) over 75% indicated that after the course they were analyzing what they read more carefully; and (4) there was unanimous support for the use of newspapers as an instructional tool. The course syllabus, survey instrument, a tabulation of survey responses, and comments of respondents are appended. (JMC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED324075

LEARNING LOGIC IN THE GLOBAL ARENA THROUGH TELECOMMUNICATION

BY

Marion Lanham
Hartford Community College, Maryland

Marlene C. Cowan
Towson State University, Maryland

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. C. Cowan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

JC 900 527

Learning Logic in the Global Arena Through Telecommunication

Dr. Marion Lanham and Dr. Marlene C. Cowan

When Harvard University first opened its doors in 1636, its overall mission was to provide students with knowledge and guidance that would assist them in meeting their needs and achieving their goals and aspirations throughout life. Three hundred fifty-four years later, as some thirty-six hundred colleges and universities across America open their doors to begin the 1990's, their collective primary goal is still essentially that set forth by the Nation's first institution of higher learning. (Statistical Abstracts, 1990) Whether they be two-year, four-year, public or private in nature, whether they be liberal arts, technical, vocational or multiple in curricula focus, and whether they be open access or academically selective in admission criteria, they remain committed to the aim of advanced preparation for the world beyond the classroom.

At no time in the history of American higher education has accomplishment of this goal been a simple feat. Complications and roadblocks of one kind or another have always been present. Arguably, however, never has the challenge been so formidable, never have the responsibilities been so great, and never have the complications and roadblocks been so many and so varied as they are today. At the same time, never has the need been so urgent, and never have the stakes been so high.

Clearly, we have entered a new cultural era, the era deemed the Age of Information. It is an era in which information is the dominant resource, a resource available has been noted by Harlun Cleveland (1990, p. 329), in "chronic surplus." As Cleveland (1990) has pointed out, too, no other resource has ever been so accessible to the masses. It is a resoure that has been rendered nearly worldwide public domain by today's state of the art and beyond technology. Isolation in the Information Age is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve, let alone maintain. "In the world of information richness, you'll be able to be remote if you want to, but you'll have to work at it." (Cleveland, 1990, p. 329).

Furthermore, information is a resource every changing in nature and ever increasing in accessible quantity. An old journalistic adage proclaims that today's news is tomorrow' shistory. Now, with increasing regularity, today's news is just as much history today as it will be tomorrow. Never has the word current encompassed such a limited time span.

Paralleling the unprecedented explosion in data quantity and accessibility is another Information Age benchmark -- a vast increase in people access and interaction. The dimensions of this contact include both the intimately pesonal and the starkly impersonal. Increasingly, community is being defined in terms of people rather than geography. Communication with others is little short of instantaneous, be it around the block or around the world.

Maximum, indeed, often adequate, pesonal and career success in this environment demands maximum participation, indeed, maximum immersion in it. It demands the ability to amass, retrieve, process, analyze, and act upon staggering volumes of data -- and to do so quickly and appropriately. It demands in-depth, often empathetic, understanding of, and communication with, many widely diverse individuals and groups of individuals. And it demands a level of technological literacy sufficient to meet one's needs and desire for today, tomorrow, and for many tomorrows to come.

It is for this world, awash in information, baffling in technological capability and potential, and sometimes oppressive in its degree of people-to-people contact, that those in higher education are attempting to do their share to prepare the students of the 1990's and beyond. The scope, magnitude, and constantly changing nature of Information Age events alone would render this task monumental. However, that world outside the classroom is far from the only challenge confounding the efforts of educators. Perhaps, even more problematic are internal factors. Staffing, facilities, and state-of-the-art equipment shortages, greater workload responsibilities, pressure to research and publish, faculty/administration differences of opinion, and, of course, the flame that fuels most of the other fires -- budget sterility -- are sources of perpetual consternation. All of these variables are major contributors to a situation in which what can be taught feasibly pales sadly in the light of what should be taught and is available to teach.

However, few, if any, factors so frustrate the efforts of Information Age college and university teachers as does the profile of Information Age students themselves.

It is a profile, perhaps, best described as highly complex, widely diverse, and multi-faceted. Never before have so many elected to pursue post-high school instruction. As colleges and universities begin the 1990's, some 12,849,000 students are enrolled in one capacity or another. It is estimated that, by the end of the 1990's, this figure will increase by approximately 3% according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (1989). Never before have those enrolled in institutions of higher learning exhibitd such a wide range of skills, abilities, interests, and aptitudes. Never has such a high proportion of those traditionally considered to be academically under-prepared been accepted. Never before have students been so representative on an international scale racially, ethnically, culturally, or socioeconomically. Never have transiency and variation in age distribution been such key features of the profile of learners. Never have home environments been so dissimilar. Never has such a wide range in employment type and status existed. And, never before have so many forces competed with learning for the time, attention, and efforts of student.

The extensive and ever-growing diversity of the student population can be attributed to various combinations of many factors. Primary among them is the prevalence of the notions that everyone has a right to higher education and that it is rapidly becoming anecessity for nearly everyone.

More liberal admission policies on the part of many institutions are attracting greater numbers and varieties of students. Greater availability of numerous forms of financial assistance has increased the economic feasibility of a college education for many. Rapidly expanding employer incentives and assistance, too, are motivating individuals in more and more diversified job situations to seek, at least, certificates or associate degrees. For others, improved economic status, and impressive variety of courses, programs and tracks from which to choose, or the desire for personal enrichment is the factor prompting enrollment. Whatever the nature or degree of influence of contributing variables, the result is clear -- an ever-broadening heterogeneity among those walking the campuses of colleges and universities in the United States.

As would be expected, inherent in and resulting from this heterogeneity is a wide range of attitudes toward education and its roles in one's life. Transcending these distinctions, however is a most important universally shared expectation. That expectation (many would label it demand) is that there be clearly indicated concrete and immediate applicability of what is taught in the classroom to life in the Information Age beyond graduation.

In short, today, as more than three and one-half centuries ago, college and university instructors are about the business of being the final rung on the ladder of academic preparation for life. Clearly, too, the parameters of that endeavor have broadened to include personal and career prepartion, as well. They undertake this task in an escalating

Information Age environment that is often more revolutionary than evolutionary. They undertake it, too, in an internal arena fraught with growing professional, fiscal, and financial dilemmas. Perhaps, most challenging, however is that broad and complex array of students. They are students whose needs must be met at once, collectively and individually; they are students with little time, patience, or desire for learning that is not clearly relevant to the here-and-now real world.

Developing instructional content, strategies, techniques, and resources that will effect the mission of higher education under these conditions understandably is the dominant feature of the time and effort spent in academic circles. It is the driving force instrumental to the introduction and/or formalization of much that is new, non-traditional, and experimental in instructional approach. The remainder of this paper will discuss the preliminary results of one such approach being used in a particular course and speculate on its cogency for that course and for higher education instruction, in general. Prior to doing so, however, a brief description of relevant aspects of the course, its setting and the approach itself are in order.

Undoubtedly, variations of this approach are being utilized by large numbers of instructors in institutions of higher learning across the country. The particular strategy discussed here, however, was designed to address the objectives established for two sections of an introductory course in informal logic and critical thinking at a specific two-year community college.

Harford Community College's Principles of Logic 200 is a humanities survey elective. Those who take the course display the heterogeneity that would be expected of students at a two-year institution with an open admission policy. Most of those who take the course, however, do tend to carry cumulative grade point averages that approximate 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale. Since the introduction of Principles of Logic in the Fall of 1986, course topics have included such areas of deductive and inductive reasoning as fallacies, cause, and correlation, conditional statements and arguments, deductive truth, and validity and inductive strength (Appendix A). While these areas are still important features of the course content, they are being taught increasingly within the context of the human image system taxonomy.

Traditionally, Principles of Logic 200 has been taught using concrete and, hopefully, relevant examples to illustrate abstract formal and informal logical theory. Such practice is hardly original or revolutionary, and its instructional value is seldom contended. Today, clearly expressed student needs and expectations and the aims of higher education have combined to re-emphasize the importance and increase the definitiveness of this strategy.

Harford's Principles of Logic is attempting to respond to this environment by utilizing news of the day and, when possible, the moment, as the primary isntructional resource. Wire service copy and stories, editorials, letters, features, columns, advertisements, etc., taken from daily and weekly newspapers provide an excellent real-world here-and-now

milieu for examining virtually every aspect of course content. The nature and quantity of written and oral activities and exercises using this material to initiate and assess deductive and inductive reasoning concepts and behaviors is limited only by time, facilities, and instructor and student creative capacity. Periodicals, whether of the library or checkout counter variety, are also rich in appropriate content. While audio-visual media, real-time or otherwise, of course, possess that most attractive feature, animation, their usability is limited severely unless hard copy of the content is available.

As was noted earlier, the contextual perspective within which students in the two sections of Logic 200 are taught has become that of the human image system. This conceptualization is central to the course because it is a highly efficacious tool for analysis and understanding of issues and points of view. Such analysis can be a primary determinaant of inductive strength.

The human image system will not be discussed in detail here. However, a brief description is pertinent. For each of us, our human image systems ". . . give us the world we inhabit" (Freeman 1989, p. 23). The particulars of one's human image system determine the way in which he or she conceptualizes and interprets his or her world. They determine for every human being his or her unique point of view, or world view. As James Freeman (1989) has written, "The image system is our system of images of what the spatial, temporal, relational dimensions of the world are like, which objects and events are related in those dimensions, and

what value different elements of th world have for us" (p. 22). Awareness of and insight into one's own image system and the image systems of others can broaden and strengthen considerably one's basis for reaching conclusions and making judgments. It can significantly broaden tolerance of cultural diversity and understanding of the motivations, preconceptions, and actions of others. As Freeman (1989) points out, awarenes and appreciation of the human image system " . . . lets us be more human" (p. 31).

Necessary to this approach is exposure to as much information and as many perspectives as possible. Varied treatments of a topic or issue within a given newspaper, extensive material published across newspapers, and even more exhaustive coverage gleaned from combinations of media are excellent means of accomplishing this aim.

While newspapers and other news sources provided by students, the isntructor, and the college library are in themselves excellent facilitators of the human image system approach to Principles of Logic 200, their value has been enhanced markedly through the use of on-line computer network services. Through these networks, hundreds of newspapers and other sources of current news from across the United States and numerous nations abroad can be accessed. To date, CompuServe Information Services of Columbus, Ohio, has been the network thorugh which stories, columns, editorials, etc. have been obtained. In the very near future, however, additional networks, such as Express, Data Times, Viewtext, and/or Nexus will be added. Through these networks, the

contents of such resources as The Washington Post, The Chicago Tribune, The Los Angeles Times, The Miami Herald, The Toronto Star, The London Times, The Associated Press, United Press International, Asahi News Service, and TASS can be brought into any given classroom at one time, regardless of its location. The price tag for access ranges from very affordable to prohibitive dpending on the particular network, the source of information, the time on line, and the budget status of the institution, the instructor, and/or the students.

Other limitations and restrictions do exist, of course -- some minor, some significant. Some reside in the nature of the particular network being utilized, some in electronic transmission, some in student and/or faculty computer illiteracy, and many in facilities and equipment availability. Sincere belief that the instructional merit of newspapers and other news sources, as well as their on-line delivery, far outweigh any adjustments that must be made in order to utilize them, prompted their introduction into Logic 200 at Harford Community College. Neither their continued nor expanded use in the course would or should be sustained, however, if not warranted by student reaction.

During the first few years in which the course was offered only moderate use was made of current newspapers and other news sources, primarily for purposes of fallacy illustration and examples of conditional, or if-then, statments. No material was obtained from computer networks. Even during these years, end-of-semester course evaluations, as well as frequent informal written and oral comments,

praised the use of concrete daily real-world happenings.

As the spring, 1990 semester progressed, the use of newspapers and other print news sources was expanded significantly. For the first time, extensive quantities of newspaper and wire service material was downloaded from CompuServe Information Systems and distributed to students for use in the study of numerous topics. Effects of perception and language on reasoning, causal/correlational distinction, identification of premises and conclusions, detection and construction of sound deductive arguments, and assessment of inductive strength were major areas of course content studied primarily through various sections of newspapers and other sources of daily news and information. As diverse often contradictory positions on an issue or event were assessed, the human image system was the conceptual taxonomy within which they were approached.

Both during and after the semester student feedback was expressly sought. On numerous occasions during the semester, students were invited to discuss their reactions to the increasingly heavy reliance on print news sources with the instructor. Approximately forty percent of them did. They were also asked to make suggestions for changes and improvements by indicating them to the instructor and/or stating them on course evaluation forms. Undoubtedly, however, the most structured and formal effort to obtain feedback was undertaken approximately six weeks after the Spring, 1990 semester had closed.

The fifty-two students who had completed all requirements for the course were sent surveys requesting responses to eleven specific questions

and a final item soliciting open-ended comments (Appendix B). The intent was to obtain data pertinent to tentative assessment of the value of newspapers and other print news sources as resources for: 1) teaching course content; 2) demonstrating relevant real-life applicability of education; 3) increasing knowledge of and interest in issues and events of the day; 4) building and sustaining interest in this logic course; and 5) increasing interest in print news and information media.

Results

Twenty-seven of the fifty-two students to whom questionnaires were sent completed and returned them. Responses to closed-ended questions are presented in Appendix C, Table 1. Responses pertinent to the request for comments appear in Appendix C, Table 2.

As Table 1 indicates, seventeen of the twenty-seven respondents stated that they were looking forward at least to some degree to taking the course when the semester began. Eight entered Principles of Logic with negative feelings. Twenty-three of the twenty-seven respondents reported that after the completing the course, they had found it at least somewhat interesting. With only one exception, all respondents felt that the course had been of at least some value in helping to improve thinking skills. Almost fifty percent reported that it had been very valuable in this area. Only one of the twenty-seven respondents felt that using newspapers decreased the interest value of the course. Slightly more than fifty percent found newspapers to be a very valuable tool in increasing

critical thinking skills, and almost all of the remainder deemed it somewhat valuable in this respect. Only two students reported that they spent more than five hours each week reading newspapers prior to taking Logic 200. One-third of the respondents felt that using newspaper in the course increased the amount of time they spent with that medicum weekly, but two-thirds of the respondents stated that it had not done so for them. More than seventy-five percent of the respondents indicated that they were analyzing what they read in newspapers more thoughtfully and carefully after using them in their Logic course. More than seventy-five percent also reported that using current news as a learning resource increased their interest in that news; and some eighty-eight percent felt that using current news as a learning resource in the course had taught them to think more carefully about that news.

As Table 2 in Appendix C reveals, fourteen students responded to Item 12. Obviously, a few of the comments focused on the course instructor than on the use of newspapers and current news as learning resources. However, it was felt that they should be included in the interests of completeness and objectivity. Additionally, they are believed to be pertinent to the discussion section of this paper.

Remarks relevant to using newspapers as instructional tools in Logic 200 were unanimously positive. Students appeared to find this resource interesting, informative, and most beneficial in several ways. A few sample comments appear below (Student Responses, 1990):

1. "Newspapers are an excellent tool for important reasons. This method would increase a student's interest and dedication to reading the news and it gives a "reality" lesson in that during

analyzation of an article, students pick up on biases and literary "tricks" which he or she may not have previously been aware of. This prepares the student to watch for those things in not only newspaper articls, but in many facets of common communications being written or spoken."

The use of current items also peak interests because the student may already be following an issue and would be more likely to have additional input for it during discussions and analyzation."

2. "In my opinion, this class could of been taught solely through current events and resources."

   "Many fresh ideas can come from news articles and can be applied in many subjects. In logic, the areas of fallacies in particular, newspapers are very helpful and made me aware to be cautious when reading articles for truth and validity."

3. "Taking this class has helped to put me back in touch with the print media. In addition to being able to express myself vocally, it is Important to be able to understand and evaluate written reports, stories, statistics, and to be able to communicate with others at this same level of understanding."

4. "I though newspapers were most interesting because they were the most current and offered a variety of choices in selecting materials for the class. They were more readily available and I felt a sense of confidence and satisfaction in being "up-to-date" on current issues. It is not evident that I was not a newspaper fan. I have an old notion that newspapers are for men and those involved in the business world! (I hate to admit that!) I really renjoyed the class."

5. "The newspaper articles were much more interesting than reading the books that were assigned for the course. I would rather read articles than the stories in the book anyway."

Discussion and Conclusions

The descriptive study reported here was merely an initial exploratory probe on the part of the authors. Its fundamental aim was to obtain data that would aid in the formulation of questions, hypotheses, and speculations for far broader empirically structured research on the

effectiveness of newspapers as a primary instructional medium in higher education. The authors lay no claim to empiricism in study conception, design, or execution. Thus, conclusions and interpretations must be viewed as applicable strictly to the particular situation. Nevertheless, findings are most interesting and instructive and certainly suggest direction for further research.

Both responses to closed-ended questions and comments on the survey instruments clearly indicate respondent approval of newspapers in particular, and current news in general, as instructioal tools. Not only did they seem to feel that the news of the day provides an excellent context within which to examine informal logic theory and concepts, but just as importantly, perhaps even more so in this Age of Information, respondents asserted its value in increasing their knowledge of what's happening in the Information Age world and in rekindling their interest in print media as well. Responses also seem to suggest some increase in interest in the course as a direct rsult of use of newspapers. Among the factors prompting increased utiliation of newspapers in the course was the belief that the appeal to widely diverse needs and interests inherent in newspapers would serve to stimulate interest and learning. Responses appear to support this belief directly and implicitly.

While responses clearly evidence the popularity of numerous assorted newspapers and current real-world information as classroom resources among the students surveyed, it must be remembered that the data obtained was composed of self reports. This study did not attempt to assess

comprehension of course content empirically. However, the literature in the field indicates that the many extensive studies of the potential of newspapers for teaching course content that have been designed and conducted empirically strongly support the opinions registered by the Logic 200 students. (American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation, 1986); Berryman, 1971, 1973; Berryman and Dotson, 1975; Cowan, 1978; DeRoche, 1989; Edfelt, 1990; Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1977, 1980, 1982; Palmer, 1989; Poindexter-Wilson, 1986).

A recent empirical study conducted by Palmer (1989, p. 1) revealed that:

> Analyses of pretest and posttest scores from 627 students revealed consistently highest improvement in reading vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing performance for both middle and secondary students who had newspapers with instruction. Less improvement was found for the same measures by students who had newspapers without instruction, but even these improvements were generally more than those of students who had no newspapers.

The literature also reports student self-assessments of the interest and motivational potential of newspapers highly similar to those of the Harford Community College Logic 200 students (American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation, 1986; Cowan, 1978; Dewell, 1989; Edfelt, 1990; Geyer, 1977; Verner and Murphy, 1977), and it should be noted that, despite these apparent concurrences, the vast majority of empirical studies that have been conducted in the area have focused on elementary and secondary students. Much additional reseearch is needed in the higher education environment. Instructional effectiveness, course interest value, and Information Age preparedness potential are but a few

aspects of newspaper and current news utilization in college and university classrooms that would appear to constitute fertile ground for empirical study. Course and topic-specific appropriateness, degree of integration with, and/or substitution for other instructional media and comparative effectiveness of teacher vs. student-determined reading material should also be investigated.

Just as important as empirical investigation, however, is the need to identify and publicize the ways in which newspapers and current news are already being used across the curricula and to propose additional applications. Efforts in these respects can already be noted at the primary and secondary levels (DeRoche, 1989; Vlahakis, 1988). The Logic 200 students' comments on lack of creative use of newspapers in class is well taken. What is currently being done with newspapers in the course undoubtedly is minimal in comparison to what could be done. Extensive cataloging and sharing of applications and ideas for applications among instructors is urged. Strongly encouraged, too, is much increase in attention to creative and effective use of newspapers in higher education on the parts of the education liaisons in the newspaper industry. Extensive interaction and joint projects involving the newspaper industry, college and univerity instructors, and college and university students as well, could be most valuable.

As was asserted earlier, never before has the need to attain a perfect positive correlation between formal education and personal and career demands been so imperative or so urgent. Apparently, too, never

before has it been so imperative or urgent to convince students that every effort is being made to attain this perfect correlation. It seems logical to assume that failure to do so can serve only to exacerbate continuing deficiencies in literacy and contentment in apathy with regard to current events and public affairs. Ignorance of the world and its peoples has always been dysfunctional. Today, however, such ignorance is likely to prove devastating.

Despite the remarks made on a few of the surveys submitted by the Principles of Logic 200 students, this paper in no way advocates abandonment of textbooks for newspapers. Nor does it assert that newspapers should be presented to students as consistent purveyors of Information Age truth, objectivity, fairness, and accuracy. In fact, newspaper content is at times an exellent arena in which to identify blatant shortcomings in these areas. What is being contended in this position paper is that, in many situations, in many courses, and for many reasons, newspapers should be elevated to a role of primary instructional resource in college and university classrooms. Significant empirically established evidence at the elementary and secondary levels attests to their value as a medium for the delivery of course content, a vehicle for increasing motivation and interest in reading and learning, a resource for promoting interpersonal relationships, and increasing understanding of and tolerarnce for opposing views, and clearly as a natural tool for imparting Information Age-relevant data (American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation, 1986; Berryman, 1971, 1973; Berryman and Dotson, 1975; Cowan,

1978; DeRoche, 1989; Edfelt, 1990; Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1977, 1980, 1982; Palmer, 1989; Poindexter-Wilson, 1986. There is every reason to believe that newspapers are serving similar functions in college and university classrooms in which they are being used. But let us test this assertion empirically. Let us generate additonal hypotheses to be tested with regard to the potential of newspapers and current news as viable worthwhile learning resources in the environs of academic sophistication. Further, let us make a concerted effort to accrue and disseminate information and ideas via formal organized means and channels. The combination of newspapers and telectommunication appears to have the exciting potential to bring a wealth of diverse real-time, student-relevant, Information Age data into the classroom. Too, it appears to possess almost limitless potential for exposure to, and understanding of, cultural diversity. Taking full advantage of these resources may be one way to help eradicate further student "tune-out" and perhaps even encourage some to tune back in as well. The stakes are such for our students, our society, and our world that we can ill afford failure to explore the promise of every instructional tool, option, and opportunity.

APPENDIX A

HARFORD COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Principles of Logic
Syllabus

Spring 1990

Instructor: M. Lanham Office: 836-4262 Home: 256-4843

Texts: Logic in Everyday Life: Practical Reasoning Skills, Zachary Seech

Selected Issues in Critical Thinking, Trudy Govier

General Education Goals:

Principles of Logic has been identified by Harford Community College as a General Education core course. Consequently, course content and activities are designed primarily to fulfill appropriate General Education goals. The course directly addresses Goals (2) To develop critical thinking skills through problem-solving, decision-making and other methods appropriate to a number of academic disciplines; (3) To evaluate issues in the light of artistic, intellectual, social, economic, political and scientific heritage and (5) To function more effectively as a citizen in a democratic society. The assignments aimed at attaining these goals include activities requiring the use of problem-solving and decision-making theories unique to formal and informal logic and analysis of current, sometimes sensitive, issues in the light of our intellectual and social heritage.

Course Objectives:

1. To identify and demonstrate clear thinking and good reasoning skills.
2. To identify and demonstrate avoidance of faulty thinking habits.
3. To demonstrate familiarity with selected fundamental principles and concepts of formal and informal logic.
4. To discuss, from an informed perspective, current issues in informal logic and critical thinking.

Topics to be covered:

1. Fallacies
2. Foundations of thought and language
3. Deductive Reasoning
4. Inductive Reasoning
5. Analysis of arguments, claims and opinions
6. Decision-making and problem solving

(These topics will be studied using issues of current interest and concern in our society.)

(see next page)

Course Calendar:

Weeks 1-2: Introduction to course and fallacies. Seech, Chs. 1 & 5 and Goviere, Chs. 1-2.

Weeks 3-4: Foundations of thought and language. Seech, Ch. 7 and Goviere, Ch. 9.

Weeks 4-6: Deductive reasoning. Seech, Chs. 2-3. and Goviere, Ch. 15.

Week 7: Test 1

Weeks 8-16: Nature and analysis of inductive reasoning and arguments; problem-solving and decision-making. Seech, Chs. 4, 5 and 6-10 and Goviere, Chs. 4, 5, 8 and 11-14.

Week 17: FINAL EXAM WEEK: May 14-19

Major Tests, Assignments and Due Dates:

1. Test 1 -- Tuesday, March 6 and Wednesday, March 7.
2. Test 2 -- Tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 25 and Friday, April 27.
3. Fallacy Journals -- Tuesday, April 10 and Wednesday, April 11.
4. Argument Analysis -- Due during Weeks 8-16 as scheduled.
5. Problem-solving and decision-making exercises: Due during Weeks 8-16, as scheduled.

Grading:

Tests 1 and 2: Twenty percent each. Fallacy Journal: Twenty percent. Argument analysis: Twenty percent. Problem-solving and decision-making exercises: Ten percent. Other class activities and exercises: Ten percent. Unless all assignments are completed, D is the highest possible grade attainable in this course.

General Course Information and Policies:

1. Reminder: Please remember that, unless all assignments are completed, D is the highest possible grade attainable in this course.
2. Because accuracy, spelling and grammar are important elements in clarity of expression, they must be taken into consideration in the grading of all assignments.

3. If at all possible, please submit all assignments on disk, using IBM or IBM-compatible computers. Otherwise, please submit assignments on cassette or typed.

4. As the grading section above indicates, participation in class is an important part of your grade. Classwork missed when you are absent will be very difficult, if not impossible, to make up.

Thanks so much for your cooperation. Please share your ideas, knowledge and points of confusion with all of us in class. We are all here to learn, and there is no such thing as a stupid question.

HAVE A GOOD SEMESTER.

Contract:

If you understand and will abide by the preceding criterion and wish to continue in Principles of Logic, please sign below as indicated and return this segment of the sheet to the instructor no later than Wednesday, January 31st.

Spring 1990

Instructor: Marion Lanham
Principles of Logic

Student: _____

Date on which I, the student, am returning this to Dr. Lanham

_____

Appendix B

Harford
Community
College

401 Thomas Run Road
Bel Air, Maryland 21014
(301) 836-4000 879-8920

July 13, 1990

Dear Logical Thinker,

I'm sure you thought you had heard and seen the last of me as of May. Maybe, when you first saw this envelop, you thought, "Oh no, she wants to change my grade to an F and make me take that---- course all over again!" Honestly, that's not what I'm up to. Actually, I really need your help, so I am asking for a few minutes of your time. Let me explain.

As I hope--I mean I'm sure--you remember, we used articles taken from numerous newspapers as examples of the concepts we talked about in class. We also used them as the basis for a lot of our rather LIVELY discussions. Additionally, some of you participated in a video taping session in which newspaper articles were used as resources. That project will be developed further as soon as possible.

The reason for our work with newspapers is as follows: I, along with Dr. Marlene Cowan at Towson State University, am involved in a project aimed at determining the value of newspapers in particular, and news sources, in general, as primary instructional resources in higher education. Your responses to the accompanying survey are extremely important to the project. They will be the basis for much of our work during the coming months, both at Harford and nationally, with the Newspapers in Education Program of the American Newspaper Publishers Association.

Please be assured that your responses to the questions on the survey are completely anonymous. The information you supply will be used for research and publication purposes; but the only thing anyone will know about you as an individual is that you took Logic 200 at HCC during the Spring 1990 Semester. No one will know who you are. You may not be concerned with this assurance, but Federal law requires it.

Of course, the bottom-line goal for Dr. Cowan and myself is to develop the instructional strategies and resources that are of most value, relevance and interest to students. We want to pursue this goal, not just in the area of informal logic, but across the curriculum, as well. This is why we very much need and deeply appreciate your taking the time from your busy schedule to asssist us.

(over)

Many of you have already provided feedback personally and on course evaluations. Your comments have been and will continue to be a most helpful guide. The additional remarks and suggestions you make at the end of this survey will be of particular value.

Again, thanks so very much. This survey is being distributed to all students who completed all requirements for my Logic 200 course in the Spring 1990 Semester. Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelop by Friday, August 3rd. If you have been away and don't receive this until after the deadline, please complete it anyhow. It will still be of much value. Thanks for making teaching such a pleasure; and, if you have any questions about the survey, feel free to call me: 836-4262 or evenings at 256-4843.

Sincerely,

Marion Lanham lgh

Dr. Marion Lanham

ML:lgh
Enclosure (1)

SURVEY

Instructions: Please respond to the following questions using either pen or pencil; pen would be preferred. Please circle the answer which best reflects your feelings for each question. Remember this is not a test and it certainly is a lot shorter than one document you completed for me last spring. I'm sure you remember it fondly! THANK YOU.

1. How much were you looking forward to taking logic before the semester began?

   [A] very much [B] somewhat
   [C] somewhat negatively [D] very negatively
   [E] no opinion.

2. After taking the course, how would you rate its interest level?

   [A] very interesting [B] somewhat interesting
   [C] somewhat uninteresting [D] very uninteresting
   [E] not especially interesting or uninteresting.

3. How valuable do you think this course was in helping you increase your critical thinking skills?

   [A] very valuable [B] somewhat valuable
   [C] not at all valuable.

4. Do you feel the use of newspaper articles made the course:

   [A] much more interesting [B] somewhat more interesting
   [C] somewhat less interesting [D] much less interesting
   [E] had no effect.

5. How would you rate newspapers as a tool in helping you to increase your critical thinking skills?

   [A] very valuable [B] somewhat valuable
   [C] not very valuable [D] not at all valuable
   [E] no opinion.

6. Before taking this course, how much time did you spend each week reading newspapers?

   [A] less than one hour [B] one to five hours
   [C] more than five hours to ten hours
   [D] more than ten hours.

7. (A) Did using newspapers in this course affect the amount of time you spend reading newspapers each week?

   [A] yes [B] no.

   (B) If "yes," how much more time do you spend reading newspapers each week?

   _____hours.

continued

Survey - Page 2

8. What effect did using newspapers in this course have on your approach to reading newspapers now?

   [A] I analyze what I read more thoughtfully and carefully.
   [B] It had no effect.

9. Has using current news as a learning resource increased your interest in that news?

   [A] yes [B] no [C] don't know.

10. Has using current news as a learning resource caused you to think more carefully about that news?

    [A] yes [B] no [C] don't know.

11. Your responses to this question will be most helpful to us. But please answer any or all only if you feel comfortable about doing so.

    [A] _____your QPI for the Spring 1990 semester.
    [B] _____your overall cumulative QPI.
    [C] _____your final grade in Principles of Logic.

12. If you have any comments or suggestions regarding using newspapers, in particular, and current news, in general, as resources in this or in any course, please state them below. (Many people have lapsed into survey burn-out by the time they reach this point in a questionnaire. But, if you can hang in there long enough to complete this question, it would be most helpful and much appreciated.)

APPENDIX C

Table C-1

Tabulation of Survey Responses

	A	B	C	D	E	No response
Question # 1	6	11	6	1	3	0
Question # 2	9	14	3	0	1	0
Question # 3	13	12	1	–	–	1
Question # 4	13	12	0	1	1	0
Question # 5	14	11	0	0	2	0
Question # 6	16	9	1	1	0	0
Question # 7a	9	18	–	–	–	0
Question # 7b*						18
Question # 8	21	6	–	–	–	0
Question # 9	20	4	2	–	–	1
Question #10	23	1	2	–	–	1

* Question 7b - Six respondents stated 1 to 5 hours. Three respondents

Table C-2
Comments of Respondents

I thought newspapers were most interesting because they were the most current and offered a variety of choices in selecting materials for class. They were more readily available and I felt a sense of confidence and satisfaction in being "up-to-date" on current issues. It is not evident I was not a newspaper fan. I have an old notion that newspapers are for men and those involved in the business world! (I hate to admit that!) I really enjoyed the class and if you read the description of the course in the catalog it describes the course rather stiffly and indicates no correlation to the use of newspapers or other such resources.

Taking this class has helped to put me back in touch with the print media. In addition to being able to express myself vocally, it is important to be able to understand and evaluate written reports, stories, statistics, and to be able to communicate with others at this same level of understanding. Electronic media, although the popular means of disseminating information, does not offer the detail or variety of interpretation that the print media. I have found it very beneficial to be able to sort out facts from opinion and gain more information than the 15 to 20 second news blurb on TV.

The newspaper articles were much more interesting than reading the books that were assigned for the course. I would rather read articles than the stories in the book anyway.

Final projects were interesting to do, however, I found it hard to follow other students' topics due to my limited knowledge on the subject. In that regard, it was difficult to have much input on the article. Otherwise, newspaper articles were interesting to do as well as being an excellent learning tool.

For those that have not been exposed (and for those that have) to critical thinking and logical reasoning this class is strongly recommended. We (society) often are "blindly" led by those that call themselves experts, and by those that are experts. We are often unaware of how information is gathered, presented, misunderstood, and understood.

Dr. Marion Lanham is a great teacher!

Newspapers can be very informative and helpful in developing critical thinking in a logic class. I don't feel that this type of source was used as effectively as it could have been, however, there has to be a way of using the news to a more effective degree other than what you are currently doing. Try to be more creative and challenging.

Used them in my mass communications course as well as in Principles of Logic.

Many fresh ideas can come from news articles and can be applied in may subjects. In logic, the areas of fallacies in particular, newspapers are very helpful and made me aware to be cautious when reading articles for truth and validity.

I very much enjoyed this class and felt that Dr. Lanham's method of teaching was right on the mark -- it made me understand and learn. Yes, even that God awful test (Maybe next time though it could be broken down into 2 tests) Dr. Lanham's method is much more productive than other teachers who make you memorize everything instead of thinking.

Personally I would opt for more group discussion of articles from the very beginning of class. In this class we did not start using current articles til the 2nd half of the class semester. In my opinion, this class could of been taught solely through current events and resources. Also the importance of using the current material could possibly have been stressed more if they had been used from the beginning.

Newspapers are an excellent tool for important reasons. This method would increase a student's interest and dedication to reading the news and it gives a "reality" lesson in that during analyzation of an article, students pick up on biases and literary "tricks" which he or she may not have previously been aware of. This prepares the student to watch for those things not only in newspaper articles, but in many facets of common communications being written or spoken. The use of current items also peak interests because the student may already be following an issue and would be more likely to have additional input for it during discussions and analyzation.

REFERENCES

American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation. (1986). Educators: Try NIE. Washington, D.C.: The Newspaper Center.

Berryman, C. (1971). The newspaper in the elementary school: A research report to ANPA Foundation. Reston, Virginia: American Newspapers Publishers Association Foundation.

Berryman, C. and Dotson, L. (1975). Results of the use of newspapers in a college remedial reading course: A research report to ANPA Foundation. Reston, Virginia: American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation.

Cleveland, H. (1990). Epilogue: The twilight of hierarchy: Speculation on the gloal information society. In S. Corman, et. al., Foundations of Organizational Ccommunication (pp. 327-341). New York: Longman.

Cowan, M. (1978). The newspaper in education program in the state of Maryland: A case study in the communication of a statewide program to the educators of the State. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University.

DeRoche, E. (1989). Newspaper in education. A bibliography. San Diego, CA: University of San Diego.

Dewell, E. (1989). A test of an affective model of reading: The study of the use of newspapers in education. Unpublished dissertation. Tulsa, Oklahoma: University of Tulsa.

Edfelt, A. (1990, April). Teaching analytical reading with newspapers as sole reading text. Research Bulletins 14. Stockholm, Sweden: Institute of Education, University of Stockholm.

Freeman, J. (1989). The human image system and thinking critically in the strong sense. Infomal Logic, II, 19-40.

Geyer, R. (1977). Student research study: NIE. San Francisco Examiner.

National Center for Educational Statistics. (1989). Pocket projections: 1990-2000. NCES 89-649. December.

Newspaper Advertising Bureau. (1977). The influence of childhood exposure to newspaper on adult newspaper habits. Reston, Virginia: Newspaper Advertising Bureau.

Newspaper Advertising Bureau. (1980). Daily newspapers in American classrooms. New York: National Advertising Bureau.

Newspaper Advertising Bureau. (1982). Assessing the impact of newspapers in educational programs: Changes in student attitudes, newspaper reading, and political awareness. New York: Newspaper Advertising Bureau.

Palmer, B. (1989). An investigation of the effects of newspaper-based instruction on reading vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing performance of at-risk middle and secondary school students. Knight Foundation Project. Miami, Florida.

Poindexter-Wilson, P. (1986, April). The Los Angeles Times in education pilot program: The research results. Los Angeles Times.

Statistical Abstracts of the United States. (1990). 110 ed. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Government Printing Office.

Verner, Z. and Murphy, L. (1977, April). Does the use of newspapers in the classroom affect attitudes of students? The Clearning House 50, 350-351.

Vlahakis, R. (1988, May/June). From TASS to Tallahassee: In search of today's news. Classroom Computer Learning. 82-87.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges NOV 15 1990